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A BRIEF
DISCOURSE
Concerning the
NOTES
OF THE
CHURCH.

With some *REFLECTIONS* on
Cardinal BELLARMIN's Notes.

By Wm. Sherlock, D.D.

LICENSED,

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JO. BATTELY.

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A B R I E F D I S C O U R S E

Concerning the
Notes of the CHURCH, &c.

IF Cardinal *Bellarmin* had not told us, That this is a *most profitable Controversie*; I should very much have wondered at that pains which he and so many other of their great Divines have taken, to find out the Notes of the Church. For is not the Catholick Church visible? And if we can see which is this Church, what need we guess at it by marks and signs? and that by such marks and signs too, as are matter of dispute themselves? Cannot we distinguish between the Christian Church, and a *Turkish* Mosque, or *Jewish* Synagogue, or Pagan Temple? Cannot we, without all this ado, distinguish a Christian from a *Turk*, or a *Jew*, or a Pagan? And it will be as easie to find out a Christian Church, as it is to find out Christians; for a Christian Church is nothing else but a Society of Christians united under Christian Pastors, for the Worship of Christ; and where ever we find such a Society as this, there is a Christian Church, and all such particular or National Churches all the World over, make up the whole Christian Church, or the Universal Church of Christ.

*Controv. T.2.
L. 4. de Notis
Ecclesie.*

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But this will not do the Cardinal's business; Though the Christian Church is visible enough, yet not such a Church as he wants. For since there are a great many Christian Churches in the World, as the *Greek*, the *Armenian*, the *Abyssine*, the *Roman* Church, he would find out which of these Churches is the Catholick Church; which after all their shuffles they can never make any better sense of, than which of the Parts is the Whole.

Since there are many unhappy disputes among Christians, the use of Notes is to find out an Infallible Church, which must by an indisputable authority dictate to all other Churches, what they must believe, and what they must practise; and to bring all other Churches into subjection, they must find out a Church, out of whose Communion there is no pardon of sin, no Eternal life to be had. That is, in short, the use of Notes is to prove the Church of *Rome* to be the only Catholick Church, the only Infallible Oracle of Faith, and final Judg of Controversies; and that the promises of Pardon of Sin, and Eternal Life, are made only to the Church of *Rome*, and to those other Churches which are in subjection to her. Thus *Bellarmino* unriddles this matter, that the usefulness of this Inquiry after the Notes of the true Church, is, because *in the true Church only there is the true Faith, the true remission of sins, the true hope of eternal salvation*; which is certainly true, that all this is to be had only in the true Church of Christ. For there can be no true Church without the true Faith; and no remission of sins, nor hope of salvation out of the true Church. But then all the Churches in the World, which profess the true faith of Christ, are such true Churches. But this will not do the business neither; for it is not enough to know that every true Church professes

Omnes enim
confitentur in
solâ verâ Ec-
clesiâ esse ve-
ram fidem, ve-
ram peccato-
rum remissio-
nem, veram
spem salutis
æternæ. Bell.
de Notis Eccl.
cap. I.

professes the true Faith ; but we must find out such a Church, as cannot err in the Faith, and has authority to correct the Faith of all other Churches ; and we must allow the pardon of sin, and eternal life, to be had in no other Church but this ; which is the only thing, which can make such a Church the Mistress of all other Churches ; and this Church must be the Church of *Rome*, or else the Cardinal is undone with all his Notes and Marks of the Church.

The observing this, gives us the true state of this Controversie ; which is not, what it is which makes a Church a true Church ; which is necessary for all Christians to know, that they may take care, that nothing be wanting in their Communion, which is essential to a true Church ; which is the only use of Notes that I know of : but the dispute is, how among all the divisions of Christendom, we may find out that only true Church, which is the Mistress of all other Churches, the only Infallible Guide in Matters of Faith, and to which alone the promises of pardon and salvation are made ; and by some Notes and Characters of such a Church, to prove, that the Church of *Rome* is that Church. The first of these is what the Protestants intend in those Notes they give of the true Church ; to show what it is which is essential to the being and constitution of a Christian Church ; for that, and none else, is a true Church, which has all things essential to a true Church. The second is, what the *Papists* intend by their Notes of a Church ; to prove, that the Church of *Rome* is the only true Church : and some brief remarks upon both these ways, will abundantly serve for an Introduction to a more particular examination of Cardinal *Bellarmin's* Notes of the Church, which

which is the only design of these Papers.

It is no wonder, that *Papists* and *Protestants* differ so much about the Notes of the true Church, since the questions, which each of them intend to answer by their several Notes, so vastly differ. When you ask a Protestant, What are the Notes of a true Church? He answers to that question, What it is, which is essential to a true Church; or what it is, which makes a Church a true Church; that is, *What a true Church is?* And examines the truth of his Church by the essential marks and properties of a Church. When you ask a *Papist* for Notes of a true Church, he answers to that question, *Which is a true Church?* and thinks to point you out to a true Church by some external marks and signs, without ever inquiring what it is, which is essential to a Church; and this he must of necessity do, according to his principles; for he can know nothing of Religion till he has found the Church, from which he must learn every thing else. Let us consider then which of these is most reasonable.

First, To begin with the *Protestant* way of finding out the Church by the essential properties of a true Church; Such as the profession of the true Christian Faith, and the Christian Sacraments rightly and duly administered by persons rightly ordained, according to the Institution of our Saviour, and the Apostolical practice. This is essential to a true Church; for there can be no true Christian Church without the true Christian Faith, and Christian Sacraments, which cannot be rightly administered but by Church-Officers rightly and duly Ordained. The Regular Exercise of Discipline is not necessary to the being of the Church, but to the purity and good government of it.

This

This is the sum of what the Protestants alledg for the Notes of the true Church, and these are as infallible Notes of a true Church, as Humane Nature is of a man; for they are the Essential Principles of it. By this every man may know whether he be a Member of a true Church or not; for where this is, there is a true Church; where this is not, there is no true Church, whatever other marks of a Church there be. And I know no other use of Notes, but to find out what we seek for.

In answer to such Notes as these, Cardinal *Bellarmin* objects Three things.

1. That Notes, whereby we will distinguish things, must not be common to other things, but proper and peculiar to that of which it is a Note. As if you would describe a man to me, whom I never saw, so as that I may know him when I meet him; it is not enough to say, that he has two Hands, or two Eyes, &c. because this is common to all Men. And this he says is the Fault of these Notes: For as for *the sincere Preaching of the Truth*, or the Profession of the true Christian Faith, this is common to all Sects, at least, in their own Opinion; and the same may be said of the Sacraments. All Sects and Professions of Christians, either have the true Faith and Sacraments, or at least think that they have so; and therefore these marks cannot visibly distinguish the true Church from any other Sect of Christians.

Now I must confess, these Notes, as he well observes, are common to all Christian Churches, and were intended to be so: and if this does not answer his Design, we cannot help it. The Protestant Churches

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Churches do not desire to confine the Notes of the Church to their own private Communion; but are very glad, if all the Churches in the World be as true Churches as themselves. The whole Catholick Church, which consists of a great many particular Diocesan, or National Churches, has the same Nature; And when the whole consists of univocal parts, every part must have the same Nature with the whole: And therefore as he who would describe a man, must describe him by such Characters as fit all Mankind; so he who gives the Essential Characters of a Church, must give such Notes as fit all true Churches in the World. This indeed does not fit the Church of *Rome*, to make it the only Catholick, and the only true Church, nor do we intend it should; but it fits all true Churches, wherever they are, and that is much better.

To answer then his Argument, when we give Notes, which belong to a whole Species, as we must do, when we give the Notes of a true Christian Church; (there being a great many true Churches in the World, which make up the Catholick, or Universal Church) we must give such Notes as belong to the whole kind; that is, to all true Christian Churches. And though these Notes are common indeed to all true Christian Churches, yet they are proper and peculiar to a true Christian Church; as the Essential Properties of a man are common to all men, but proper to mankind: And this is necessary to make them true Notes; For such Notes of a true Church, as do not fit all true Churches, cannot be true Notes.

As .

As for what the Cardinal urges, That all Sects of Christians think themselves to have the true Faith, and true Sacraments; I am apt to think they do; but what then? If they have not the true Faith, and true Sacraments, they are not true Churches, whatever they think of it; and yet the true Faith, and true Sacraments, are certain Notes of a true Church. A Purchase upon a bad Title, which a man thinks a good one, is not a good Estate; but yet a Purchase upon a Title, which is not only thought to be, but is a good one, is a good Estate. All that can be said in this case, is, That men can be no more certain, that they have a true Church, than they are, that they have a true Faith, and true Sacraments; and this I readily grant. But as mens mistakes in this matter, does not prove, that there is no true Faith, nor true Sacraments; so neither does it prove, that a true Faith, and true Sacraments, are not Notes of the true Church.

2. The Cardinal's second Objection is, That the Notes of any thing must be more known than the thing it self; which we readily grant. Now says he, which is the true Church, is more knowable than which is the true Faith: and this we deny, and that for a very plain reason, because the true Church cannot be known without knowing the true Faith: for no Church is a true Church, which does not profess the true Faith. We may as well say, that we can know a Horse, without knowing what the shape and figure of a Horse is, which distinguishes it from all other Creatures, as that we can know a Christian Church, without knowing what the Christian Faith

is, which distinguishes it from all other Churches : or we may as well say, that we can know any thing without knowing what it is, since the very Essence of a true Church consists in the true Faith, which therefore must be first known before we can know the true Church.

But the Cardinal urges, that we cannot know what true Scripture is, nor what is the true interpretation of Scripture, but from the Church ; and therefore we must know the Church before we can know the true Faith. As for the first, I readily grant, that at this distance from the writing the Books of the New Testament, there is no way to assure us, that they were written by the Apostles, or Apostolical men, and owned for inspired Writings, but the Testimony of the Church in all Ages. But herein we do not consider them as a Church, but as credible Witnesses. Whether there be any such thing as a Church, or not, we can know only by the Scriptures : But without knowing whether there be a Church or not, if we know, that for so many Hundred years, these Books have been owned to be written by such men, and have been received from the Apostles days till now, by all who call themselves Christians ; this is as good an Historical Proof as we can have for any thing ; and it is the Authority of an uninterrupted Tradition, not the Authority of the Church, considered as a Church, which moves us to believe them : For setting aside the Authority of Tradition, how can the Authority of a Company of men, who call themselves the Church, before I know whether there be any Church, move me to believe any thing which was done 1600. years ago ? But there is a Company of men in the
World,

World, and have been successively for 1600. years (whether they be a Church or not, is nothing to this question), who assure me, that these Books, which we call the Scriptures, were written by such inspired men, and contain a faithful account of what Christ did, and taught, and suffered; and therefore I believe such Books: and from them I learn what that true Faith is which makes a true Christian Church.

As for the true interpretation of Scripture, that we cannot understand what it is, without the Church, this I also deny. The Scriptures are very intelligible to honest and diligent Readers, in all things necessary to salvation: and if they be not, I desire to know, how we shall find out the Church: for certainly the Church has no Character but what is in the Scripture: and then if we must believe the Church before we can believe or understand the Scriptures, we must believe the Church, before we can possibly know whether there be a Church, or not. If we prove the Church by the Scripture, we must believe and understand the Scripture, before we can know the Church: If we believe and understand the Scriptures upon the Authority and Interpretation of the Church, considered as a Church, then we must know the Church before the Scripture. The Scripture cannot be known without the Church, nor the Church without the Scripture, and yet one of them must be known first, and yet neither of them can be known first, according to these Principles, which is such an absurdity, as all the Art of the World can never palliate.

character

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3. The Cardinal's third Objection is, That the true Notes of the Church must be inseparable from it; whereas the Churches of *Corinth* and *Galatia* did not always teach true Doctrine, some of the Church of *Corinth* denying the Resurrection, and the *Galatians* warping towards *Judaism*; and the Church of *Corinth* being guilty of great miscarriages in receiving the Lords-Supper; and yet were owned for true Churches by the Apostles. An argument which much became the Cardinal to use, it being the best evidence I know of for the Church of *Rome* being a true Church, that every corruption in Faith and Sacraments do not Unchurch; but how this proves that true Faith and true Sacraments are not an essential note and character of a true Church, I cannot guess: I would desire any one to tell me for him, whether a corrupt Faith and false Sacraments be the Notes of a true Church; or whether it be no matter as to the nature of a Church, what our Faith and Sacraments are?

Secondly, Let us now consider the Cardinal's way, by some certain marks and notes, to find out which is the true Church, before we know what a true Church is. To pick out of all the Churches in the World, one Church, which we must own for the only true Church, and reject all other Churches, which do not subject themselves to this one Church. To find out such a Church on whose authority we must rely for the whole Christian Faith; and in whose Communion only pardon of sin is to be had. That this is the use of Notes in the Church of *Rome*, I have already shewn you; and truly they are very pretty things to be proved by Notes; as to consider them particularly,

I. To

1. To find out which is the true Church, before we know what a true Church is. This methinks is not a natural way of inquiry, but is like seeking for we know not what. There are two inquiries in order of nature before *which is the true Church*, viz. Whether there be a true Church or not, and what it is. The first of these the Cardinal takes for granted, that there is a Church; but I won't take it for granted, but desire these Note-makers to give me some Notes to prove, that there is a Church. There is indeed a great deal of talk and noise in the World about a Church, but that is no proof, that there is a Church; and yet it is not a self-evident proposition, that there is a Church; and therefore it must be proved. Now that there is a Church, must be proved by Notes, as well as which is this true Church, or else the whole design of Notes is lost; and I would gladly see those Notes, which prove that there is a Church, before we know what a Church is. To understand the mystery of this, we must briefly consider the reason and use of Notes in the Church of Rome; according to the Popish resolution of Faith into the authority of the Church; the first thing we must know, is, which is the True Church; for we must receive the Scriptures, and the Interpretation of them, and the whole Christian Faith and Worship, from the Church; and therefore can know nothing of Religion, till we have found the Church. The use then of Notes is to find out the Church before, and without the Scriptures; for if they admit of a Scripture-proof, they must allow that we can know and understand the Scriptures without the authority or interpretation of the Church, which undermines the very foundation of Popery: Now I first desire to
know

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know how they will prove, That there is a Church without the Scripture? That you'll say is visible it self, for we see a Christian Church in the World; but what is it I see? I see a company of men who call themselves a Church, and this is all that I can see; and is this seeing a Church? A Church must have a Divine Original and Institution; and therefore, there is no seeing a Church without seeing its Character; for there can be no other Note or Mark of the being of a Church, but the Institution of it.

And this proves, that we cannot know, that there is a Church, without knowing in some measure what this Church is; for the Charter which founds the Church, must declare the Nature and Constitution of it, what its Faith and Worship, and Laws and Privileges are. But now these essential Characters of a Church must not be reckoned by the *Romanists* among the Notes of a Church, for then we must find out the true Church by the true Faith, and the true Worship; not the true Faith by the true Church; which destroys Popery.

Hence it is, that these Note-makers never attempt to give us any Notes, whereby we shall know that there is a Church, or what this Church is; for there are no Notes of these, but such as they dare not give, *viz.* The Authority of the Scriptures, and every mans private judgment of the Sense and Interpretation of them; for at least till we have found a Church, we must judg for our selves, and then the Authority of the Church comes too late; for we must first judg upon the whole of Religion, if we must find out a true Church by the true Faith, before we can know the true Church; and we cannot rely on her Authority,

nity, before we know her; and therefore they take it for granted, that there is a Church, which they can never prove in their way, and attempt to give some Notes whereby to know which is the Church; and then learn, what the Church is, from the Church herself; which is like giving marks whereby to know an Unicorn, before I know whether there be an Unicorn or not, or what it is.

2. Another blunder in this Dispute about Notes is, That they give us Notes whereby to find out the true Catholick Church, before we know what a particular Church is. For all *Bellarmin's* Notes are intended only for the Catholick Church; and therefore his first Note is the *name Catholick*; whereas the Catholick Church is nothing else but all true Christian Churches in the World, united together by one common Faith and Worship, and such acts of Communion as distinct Churches are capable of, and obliged to. Every particular Church which professes the true Faith and Worship of Christ, is a true Christian Church; and the Catholick Church is all the true Christian Churches in the World; which have all the same Nature, and are in some sense of the same Communion: So that it is impossible to know what the Catholick Church is, before we know what a particular Church is, as it is to know what the Sea is, before we know what Water is: Every true, single, particular Church has the whole and intire nature of a Church, and would be a true Church, though there were no other Church in the World; as the Christian Church at *Jerusalem* was, before any other Christian Churches were planted; and therefore there can be no other Notes of a True Church, but what belong to

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to every true particular Church; and that can be nothing but what is essential to a Church, and what all true Christian Churches in the World agree in, *viz.* The True Faith and Worship of Christ.

Now, so far as *Bellarmin's* Notes belong to every true particular Church, so far we allow them, and let the Church of *Rome* make the best of them She can; for we doubt not to make our claim to them, as good, and much better than hers; but he has named very few such; the 6th, the Agreement and Consent in Doctrine with the Ancient and Apostolick Church; and the 8th the Holiness of its Doctrine, are the cheif, if not the only Notes of this nature; and these we will stand and fall by; many of his other, are not properly the Notes of a true Church, any otherwise than as they are Testimonies of the truth of common Christianity, which is professed by all true Churches; and if they are Notes of the Church, so every true particular Church has a share in them. Such as his 9th, the efficacy of Doctrine. The 10th, the Holiness of the lives of the first Authors and Fathers of our Religion; and I suppose, the Holiness of Christ and his Apostles give Testimony to the truth of common Christianity, and therefore to all Churches who profess the common Faith once delivered to the Saints. The 11th, the Glory of Miracles, which also proves the truth of Christian Religion; and I hope a little better than Popish Miracles do Transubstantiation. The 12th, is the Spirit of Prophecy, which as far as it is a good Note, belongs to the Religion, not to the Church. Other Notes he assigns, which I doubt will prove no Notes at all, as 13, 14, 15. because they are not always true, and at best uncertain.

His

His third and fourth Notes are not Notes of a Church, but God's Promises made to his Church: as of a long Duration, that it shall never fail, and Amplitude or Extent, and multitude of Believers. These Promises we believe God will fulfil to his Church, but they can be no Notes, which is the true Church. For the first of these can never be a Note till the day of Judgment. That Church which shall never be destroyed is the true Church, but a bare long continuance is no Mark of a true Church; for an Apostatical Church may continue by the patience and forbearance of God many hundred Years, and be destroyed at last; and then this Argument of a long Duration is confuted: And as for Amplitude and Extent, that is not to distinguish one Christian Church from another, that the most numerous Church should be the truest; but to distinguish the Christian Church from all other Religions; and then I doubt this Prophecy has not received its just Accomplishment yet; for tho we take in all the Christian Churches in the World, and not exclude the greatest part of them, as the Church of *Rome* does, yet they bear but a small proportion to the rest of the World.

And now there are but three of his fifteen Notes of the Church left. The first concerning the Name *Catholick*, which makes every Church a Catholick Church, which will call it self so: Tho Catholick does not declare what a Church is, but in what Communion it is, and is no Note of a true Church, unless it be first proved, that they are true Churches, which are in Communion with each other: For if three parts in four of all the Churches in the World were very corrupt and degenerate in Faith and Worship, and were in one Communion, this would be the most Catholick

Communion, as Catholick signifies the most general and universal; but yet the fourth part, which is sincere, would be the best and truest Church, and the Catholick Church, as that signifies the Communion of all Orthodox and Pure Churches.

His ~~first~~ Note is, *the Succession of Bishops in the Church of Rome from the Apostles till now.* This is a Note of the Roman Church; and the Succession of Bishops in the Greek Church, is as good a Note of the Greek Church. And any Churches which have been later planted, who have Bishops in Succession from any of the Apostles or Apostolical Bishops, by this Note are as good Churches as they. So that this is a Note common to all true Churches, and therefore can do the Church of Rome no Service.

His seventh Note indeed is home to his purpose: That that is the only true Church, which is united to the Bishop of Rome, as to its Head. If he could prove this, it must do his business without any other Notes, but that will be examined hereafter. But it is like the Confidence of a Jesuit, to make that the Note of the Church, which is the chief Subject of the Dispute.

The Sum is this: There can be no Notes of a true Church, but what belong to all true Churches: for tho there is but one Catholick Church, yet there are a great many true particular Churches, which make up this Catholick Church, as homogeneal Parts, which have all the same Nature. But now very few of the Cardinal's Notes belong to all true Churches; and those which do so, signifie nothing to his purpose, because they are common to more Churches than the Church of Rome. And as for the Catholick Church, that is known only by particular Churches; for it is nothing else, but the Union of all true Churches in Faith and Worship, and

and one Communion, as far as distinct Churches at a great distance from each other are capable of it: And therefore there is no other way to know which is the Catholick Church, but by knowing all the true Churches in the World, which either are in aſtural Communion with one another, or are in a Diſpoſition for it, whenever occaſion is offered: For it is impoſſible that all true Chriſtian Churches all the World over, ſhould ever joyn in any viſible and external Acts of Communion: and therefore tho we know and believe, that there is a Catholick Church, becauſe we are aſſured that all true Churches in the World are but one Church, the one Body and Spouſe of Chriſt; yet it is next to impoſſible to know all the Parts of the Catholick Church (without which we cannot know the whole Catholick Church) becauſe we cannot know all the particular true Churches all the World over. Nor indeed is there any need we ſhould: For we may certainly know which is a truly Catholick Church, without knowing the whole Catholick Church. For every Church, which profeſſes the true Catholick Faith, and impoſes only Catholick Terms of Communion, and is ready, out of the Principles of Brotherly Love and Charity (that cement of Catholick Communion) to communicate with all Churches, and to receive all Churches to her Communion upon theſe Terms, is a truly Catholick Church, which ſhews how ridiculous it is to make the Catholick Church our firſt Inquiry, and to pretend to give Notes to find out the true Catholick Church by, before we know what a true Particular Church is. But the Myſtery of this will appear more in what follows.

3dly. For another Myſtery of finding the true Church by Notes, is to pick out of all the Chriſtian Churches

Churches in the World one Church, which we must own for the only Catholick Church; and reject all other Churches as Heretical, or Schismatical, or Uncatholick Churches, who refuse Obedience and Subjection to this One Catholick Church. For if this be not the Intent of it, what will all the Notes of the Church signify to prove, that the Church of *Rome* is the only true Catholick Church? And if they do not prove this, the Cardinal has lost his labour. For tho the Notes he assigns were the Notes of a true Church, yet they may and must belong to all other true Churches, as well as to the Church of *Rome*; unless he can prove, that there is but One true Church, or but One Church, which is the Mistress of all other Churches, and the only Principle and Center of Catholick Unity. And this ought to have been proved first, before he had thought of the Notes of the Church.

So that there are many things to be proved here, before we are ready for the Notes of the Church? They must first prove, that there is but one true Church in the World: for tho we all grant, that there is but One Catholick Church, yet we say, there may be, and hope, nay more than so, know that there are many true Churches, which make up the Catholick Church. Yet before the Notes of a true Church can do any Service to the Church of *Rome*, they must prove, that there is but one true Church in the World; and then it will signify something to prove the Church of *Rome* to be that true Church.

They must prove also, that the Catholick Church does not signify all the particular true Churches that are in the World; but some one Church, which is the Fountain of Catholick Unity; which all other Churches are bound to submit to, and communicate with, if they will

will be Members of the Catholick Church. For tho all the Churches in the World were in Subjection to that Church, yet they receive their Catholicism from their Communion with that Church; and therefore that only is the Catholick Church. It is not meerly the Communion of all Churches together, which makes the Catholick Church; but it is the Subjection of all Churches to that one Catholick Church, which makes them Catholick: So that they must prove, that there is one particular Church, which is the Catholick Church; that is, that a part is the whole; that one particular Church is all the Churches of the World; for so the Catholick Church signifies in Ancient Writers. This is so absurd, that some of our Modern Advocates for the Catholick Church of *Rome* tell us, that they do not mean the particular Diocess of *Rome* by the Catholick Church, but all those Churches, which are in Communion with the Church of *Rome*: But suppose this, yet it is only the Church of *Rome* which makes all the other Churches Catholick, and therefore she only is the Catholick Church. And I will presently make them confess it to be so: For let us suppose, that no other Churches should submit themselves to the Church of *Rome*: (by the Church of *Rome* understanding the particular Diocess of *Rome*) would she be the Catholick Church or not? If notwithstanding this she would be the Catholick Church; then it is evident, that they make the particular Church of *Rome* the Catholick Church; if she would not, then I cannot see how Communion with the Church of *Rome* is essential to the Catholick Church.

These things, I say, ought to have been proved, before the Cardinal had given us the Notes of the Church; for it is a hard thing to prove by Notes, that the particular Church of *Rome* is the only Catholick Church, till it be proved,

proved, that a particular Church may be the Catholick Church, or that there is one particular Church, which is the Catholick Church. This he knew we all deny; and it is a ridiculous thing to think to convince us by Notes, that the Church of *Rome* is the particular Catholick Church; when we deny that there is any such Church; and affirm, that it is a Contradiction to own it; as great a Contradiction, as it is to say, that a Particular Church is the Universal Church.

4thly. But when I consider the farther Design of these Note-Makers, to find out such a Church on whose Authority we must rely for the whole Christian Faith, even for the holy Scriptures themselves, it makes me ~~now~~ ^{more} admire, that they should think this could be done by some Notes of a Church; especially by such Notes as the Cardinal gives us.

For suppose he had given us the Notes of a true Church, which is the utmost he can pretend to; before we can hence conclude that this Church is the Infallible Guide, and uncontrollable Judge of Controversies, we must be satisfied, that the true Church is Infallible. This indeed *Bellarmin* attempts to prove in his third Book of the Church; and it is not my Concern at present to inquire how he proves it. But I am sure this can never be proved but by Scripture; for unless Christ have bestowed Infallibility on the Church, I know not how we can prove she has it; and whether Christ have done it or not, can never be known but by the Scriptures: So that a Man must believe the Scriptures, and use his own Judgment to understand them, before it can be proved to him, that there is an Infallible Church; and therefore those who resolve the belief of the Scriptures into the Authority of the Church, cannot, without great Impudence, urge the Authority of the Scriptures to
prove

prove the Church's Infallibility; and yet thus they all do; nay prove their very Notes of the Church from Scripture, as the Cardinal does: and think this is no Circle neither, because we Hereticks believe the Scriptures without the Authority of their Church, and therefore are willing to dispute with them out of the Scriptures. But this is a fault on our side, and when we dispute with them, whatever we do at other times, we should not believe the Scriptures, till they had proved them to us their way, by the Authority of their Church; and then we should quickly see what blessed Work they would make of it. How they would prove their Church's Infallibility, and what fine Notes we should have of a Church, when we had rejected all their Scripture-proofs, as we ought to do, till they have first satisfied us, that theirs is the only true Infallible Church, upon whose Authority we must believe the Scriptures, and every thing else. I confess, I would gladly hear what Notes they would give a Pagan to find out the true Infallible Church by.

It is certainly a most senseless thing to resolve all our Faith into the Authority of the Church, as if the Church were the first Object of our Faith in Religion; whereas it is demonstrable, that we must know and believe most of the Articles of the Christian Faith before we can know whether there be any Church or not. The order observed in the Apostles Creed is a plain Evidence of this, for all those Articles which are before the Holy Catholick Church must in order of Nature be known before it. That there is a God who made the World; that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, and descended into Hell, that he
rose.

rose again the third day from the dead, and ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the Right-hand of God the Father Almighty, and from thence shall come to judge the Quick and the Dead ; I believe in the Holy Ghost ; and then we may add the Holy Catholick Church, and not till then. For the Church is a Society of Men for the Worship of God, through the Faith of Jesus Christ, by the Sanctification of the Holy Spirit, which unites them into one Mystical Body : So that we must know Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, before we can know what the Catholick Church means. And is it not strange then, that our Faith must be founded on the Authority of the Church, when we must first know all the great Articles of our Faith, before we can know any thing about a Church. This inverts the order of our Creed, which according to the Principles of the Church of *Rome* should begin thus. I believe in the Holy Catholick Church, and upon the Authority of that Church, I believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Chrst, and in the Holy Ghost : and no doubt but the Apostles, or those Apostolical Men, who framed the Creed, would have put it so, had they thought the whole Christian Faith must be resolved into the Authority of the Church.

This short Discourse, I think, is enough in general concerning the Notes of the Church ; and I shall leave the particular Examination of Cardinal *Bellarmin's* Notes to other Hands, which the Reader may expect to follow in their order.

The End.

